

2016

Research Reports Andean Past 12

David Chicoine

Louisiana State University, dchico@lsu.edu

Beverly Clement

Louisiana State University, bcleme7@lsu.edu

Kyle Stitch

Louisiana State University, kylestich@gmail.com

Catherine M. Bencic

Binghamton University--SUNY, catherinebencic@gmail.com

Alejandro Chu

Proyecto Arqueológico Incahuasi, alejandrochu@gmail.com

See next page for additional authors

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/andean_past



Part of the [Archaeological Anthropology Commons](#), [Architectural History and Criticism Commons](#), and the [Biological and Physical Anthropology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Chicoine, David; Clement, Beverly; Stitch, Kyle; Bencic, Catherine M.; Chu, Alejandro; Barnes, Monica; Urbana, Simon; Adan, Leonor; Pellegrino, Constanza; Vidal, Estefania; and Álvarez Larrain, Alina (2016) "Research Reports Andean Past 12," *Andean Past*: Vol. 12, Article 9.

Available at: http://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/andean_past/vol12/iss1/9

This Research Report is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UMaine. It has been accepted for inclusion in Andean Past by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UMaine.

Research Reports Andean Past 12

Authors

David Chicoine, Beverly Clement, Kyle Stitch, Catherine M. Bencic, Alejandro Chu, Monica Barnes, Simon Urbana, Leonor Adan, Constanza Pellegrino, Estefania Vidal, and Alina Álvarez Larrain

Argentina

Don Mateo–El Cerro, a Newly Rediscovered Late Period Settlement in Yocavil (Catamarca, Argentina)

Alina Álvarez Larrain (Museo Etnográfico, Universidad de Buenos Aires; alinaalvarezlarrain@gmail.com) writes that she has located a residential settlement called Don Mateo in Northwest Argentina (NOA), probably the site of El Cerro, first reported in 1960.

The Late Intermediate Period or LIP (A.D. 900–1430) in the Andean area is a span of time that runs from the fall of the Wari and Tiwanaku states to the formation of the Inca state. The consensus is that this period is characterized by population growth, political decentralization, complex social processes, and both cooperation and competition, including warfare, in the context of a changing political landscape (Arkush 2011). The socio-political decentralization at the beginning of the LIP appears to have given way during the second half of this period to more concentrated settlements and the investment in defensive features due to an increase in armed conflict as a possible response to population growth, climatic fluctuations, and the emergence of new ethnic and political groups. Evidence from fortified sites (*pukara*) indicates that both inter-group conflict and political integration increased towards A.D. 1200, before the region came under the control of the Inca (Arkush and Stanish 2005).

Particularly in Northwest Argentina (NOA), the beginning of the Late or Regional Development Period, contemporaneous with the LIP, is characterized by an important growth in population, extensive agricultural areas with complex irrigation systems, new technology, specialized artisans, and the emergence of regionally distinct material culture (Tarragó 2000). During the first centuries of the second

millennium A.D., a clear settlement hierarchy appears to have been absent. However, around the thirteenth century A.D., multiple nuclear settlements developed with hundreds to thousands of inhabitants. The largest sites, located on hilltops and relying on defensive features, constituted administrative centers in complex settlement hierarchies (Nielsen 1996; Tarragó 2011). These fortified sites appeared to have arisen as places for the temporary gathering of dispersed populations in times of external threat. Nevertheless, the *pukara* of the final LIP are usually characterized as places of permanent residence.

The Yocavil or Santa María Valley forms part of the region of mountains and valleys of NOA. It is one of the best known archaeological zones, and much work has occurred there. This is mainly because of the size and quantity of Late Period sites, among them many *pukara*. The valley runs from Punta de Balasto in Catamarca Province to its joining with the Calchaquí River Valley at Cafayate in Salta Province. It is bounded by the Sierra del Cajón or Quilmes on the west and by the Calchaquíes Peaks (Cumbres Calchaquíes) and the Sierra del Aconquija on the east (Figure 1). In April 2011, as part of her doctoral thesis on settlement patterns and archaeological landscapes, Alina Álvarez Larrain conducted survey in the archaeological zone of Andalhuala, in the southeast of the Yocavil Valley (Álvarez 2014). This allowed Álvarez and her team to locate a Late Period settlement known as Don Mateo or Rincón del Tío Mateo, that they believe is the settlement identified in 1960 as El Cerro, and whose exact location had been previously unknown (Arocena and Carnevali 1960). Don Mateo stands at 26°53'13.71" south, 66°2'2.63" west. This site poses new questions about the relationship between the *pukara* and settlements without defensive features. It also offers new information about the beginning of the Late Period in Yocavil and the southern Andes.

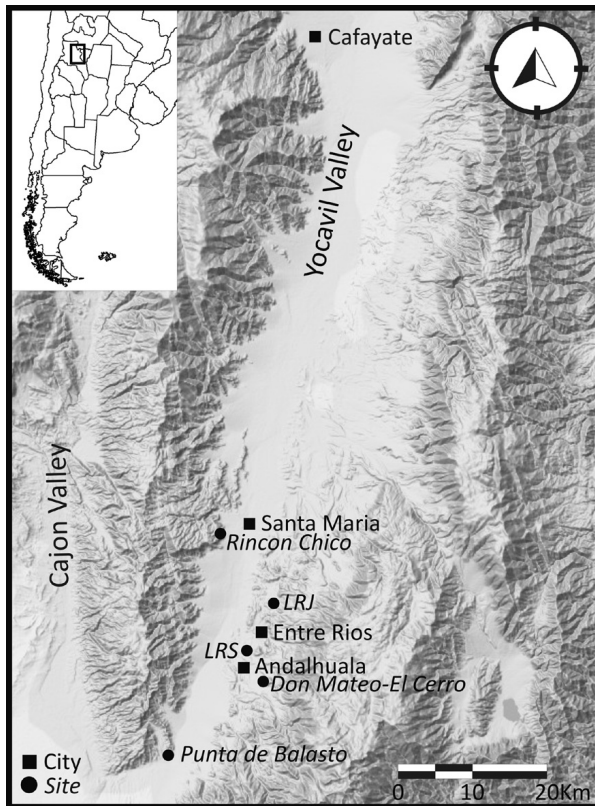


Figure 1: Yocavil Valley with the cities and archaeological sites mentioned in the text.

The archaeological location of Andalhuala

Andalhuala stands in what is today an important zone of fincas dedicated to agriculture and ranching, in the southeastern portion of the valley, twenty-five kilometers southeast of the town of Santa María. Its location is in the midst of sandy Tertiary outcrops shaped by erosion in the Quaternary. Glacis and piedmont terraces are geomorphological features of this micro-region (Ruíz 1972). These are the remains of older fans, the result of denudation of the landscape, that have been covered by a light cap of detritus, and formed by colluvial material such as angular clasts and pebbles, mixed and united with a matrix that varies from coarse sand to fine muddy clay. Their surfaces can be large, flat, and slightly inclined. In general they are divided by large gullies into islets at the same

altitude, on average between 2200 and 2300 m.a.s.l.

Even though Andalhuala is little-known in the archaeological literature of Northwest Argentina, this area has been visited frequently from the end of the nineteenth century until recently, with repeated allusions made to its archaeological richness (for a synthesis see Álvarez 2014). The main archaeological reference point in the area is the site called Loma Rica de Shiquimil (LRS), an agglutinated settlement with 189 structures on 2.45 hectares, occupying a small relict glacis that rises one hundred meters above the level of the valley floor, completely bounded by coarse sandstone (Tarragó *et al.* 1988). The characteristics of its placement, that make its ascent very risky, and that permit full visual surveillance of the main valley, allow Loma Rica de Shiquimil to be considered as one of the clearest examples of the Late Period *pukara* type settlement in Northwest Argentina.

In 1960 María L. Arocena and Blanca Carnevali explored the Andalhuala area, mentioning a Late Period settlement atop an isolated peak of the main Aconquija chain, calling it El Cerro. There they noted retention walls, and three compounds of two rectangular enclosures each, staggered along the slope of the hill, and linked by passages. The work undertaken in Enclosure 1 (Recinto 1) of one of the compounds (Unit U1), that measured 3.80 meters by 5.30 meters, resulted in a surface collection of 72 ceramic sherds belonging to local Formative Period and Late Period styles (Arocena and Carnevali 1960:57). Excavation also confirmed the presence of a well-consolidated occupation floor associated with a sub-globular olla covered with a bowl (Arocena and Carnevali 1960:60). The olla is 23.5 centimeters high, 16 centimeters in maximum diameter, and is decorated with an anthropomorphic face whose eyebrows and nose are modeled, and whose mouth is represented by an oval painted

in black with the teeth indicated. These stylistic characteristics allow one to think that this is an olla of the Rincón variant (personal communication, Myriam Tarragó, August 2014), vessels that belong in the universe of the San José ceramics from the beginning of the second millennium A.D. These are antecedents of the Santa María style, predominant during the Regional Development Period. Unfortunately, the geographical coordinates of this site are unknown and there is no locational map.

A low-lying settlement from the Late Period

As part of the pedestrian survey designed to study the settlement patterns of the Andalhuala area, and with the objective of relocating the El Cerro settlement, a relict quaternary glacia immediately to the east of the present town of Andalhuala del Alto was traversed. Local people know this settlement as Don Mateo or Rincón del Tío Mateo, taking its name from the owner of the modern finca at its base. This relict terrace is separate from the ridges of the Sierra del Aconquija and is surrounded by steep sandstone hills that are difficult to ascend. The exception is its western slope, that is in the form of a small alluvial fan cut longitudinally by a large gully with an area of about 26 hectares, rising from about 2280 to 2323 m.a.s.l. On this slope one can observe twelve architectural units, among them small habitation structures that ascend following the natural contours of the hill (Figure 2). It is possible that the site may include a larger number of architectural units covering the whole alluvial fan. This must be determined in the future by complete mapping of the settlement that will require removal of the thick vegetation that covers the alluvial fan.

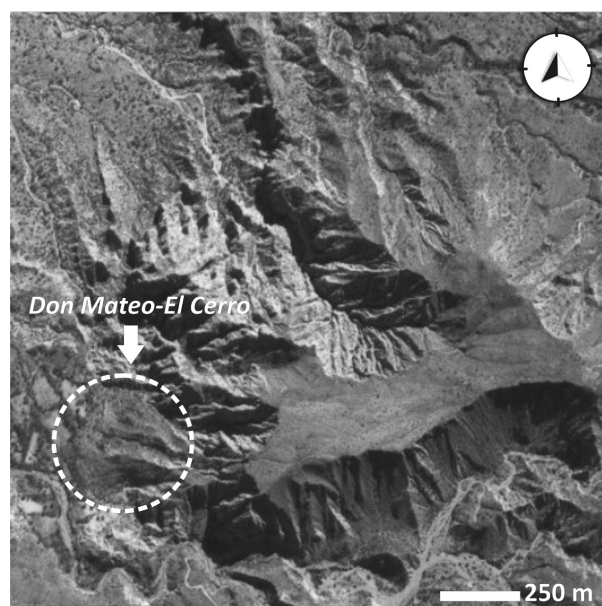


Figure 2: Satellite image showing the location of Don Mateo–El Cerro.

The architectural units recorded were numbered in accordance with their order of discovery. In each case their geographical coordinates were measured using a geographical positioning system (GPS) and their main construction characteristics were noted. The units registered are the following:

Architectural Unit 1: 2290 m.a.s.l.; a rectangular enclosure measuring 11 meters on the long sides and 6.5 meters on the short sides. There are double-faced walls filled with rubble and sediment. These exceed 0.50 meters in both height and width.

Architectural Unit 2: 2290 m.a.s.l.; an L-shaped double-faced wall filled with rubble and sediment with arms measuring 10 meters and 20 meters. It is a possible remnant of an agricultural or retention terrace.

Architectural Unit 3: (2281 m.a.s.l.); a double-faced wall filled with rubble and sediment about 5 meters long and 0.50 meters high and wide.

Architectural Unit 4: (2282 m.a.s.l.); an L-shaped wall, possibly the remains of a rectangular enclosure. The walls appear to be double-faced and to have had fill, but they have collapsed. In this structure one can observe abundant ceramics both of the local Formative Period and of the Late Period, such as Santa María style ceramics.

Architectural Unit 5: (2283 m.a.s.l.); a rectangular enclosure made of double-faced walls with fill, 13 meters on its long sides and 5.7 meters on its short sides.

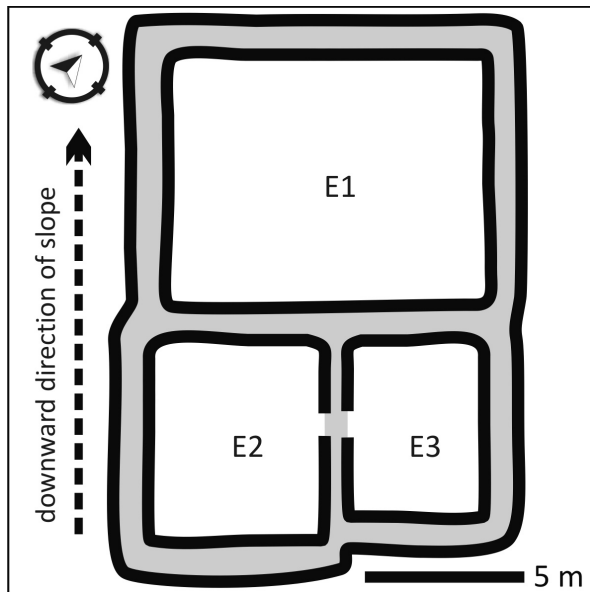


Figure 3: Sketch plan of Architectural Unit 6.

Architectural Unit 6: (2293 m.a.s.l.); a quadrilateral compound made up of three attached enclosures (Figure 3). The largest enclosure (E1) measures 7 meters by 9 meters in its largest dimensions and has a possible looter's pit in its north corner (Figure 4). The second enclosure (E2) is about 5 meters along its sides. The third enclosure (E3) measures about three meters. Enclosures E2 and E3 are connected by a 0.50 meter wide access passage. The entire unit was constructed with double-faced walls filled with rubble and sediment, about a meter wide, and excavated into the slope of the hill so that Enclosures E2 and E3 are at a higher level

than Enclosure E1. Santa María style sherds were observed on the surface.



Figure 4: General view of Enclosure 1 (E1) of Architectural Unit 6, looking from Enclosure 3 (E3).

Architectural Unit 7: (2306 m.a.s.l.); a compound of two adjacent circular enclosures made of double-faced walls with rubble and sediment fill, one meter wide. Enclosure 1 measures 4.40 meters in internal diameter, and Enclosure 2 measures 3.10 meters in internal diameter.

Architectural Unit 8: (2307 m.a.s.l.); a compound of two adjacent quadrilateral enclosures built of double-faced walls with rubble and sediment fill. Enclosure 1 measures 5.70 meters by 6.20 meters and Enclosure 2 measures 2.50 meters by 4.70 meters along their sides. The enclosures are not at the same level. Enclosure 2 is higher.

Architectural Unit 9: (2313 m.a.s.l.); a compound of two adjacent quadrilateral enclosures built of double-faced walls with rubble and sediment fill. Enclosure 1 measures 4.40 meters by 5.50 meters and Enclosure 2 measures 6.70 meters by 7.20 meters along their sides.

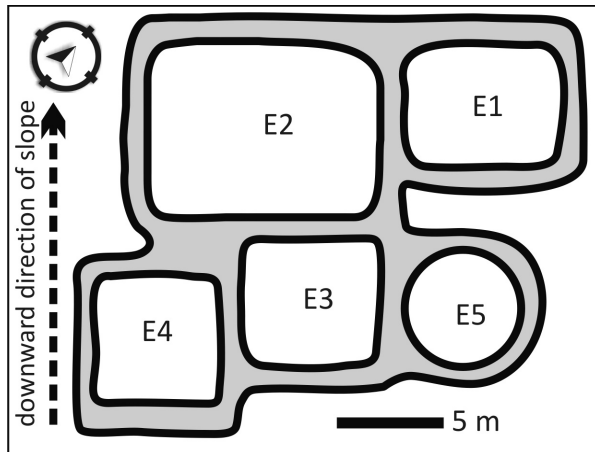


Figure 5: Sketch plan of Architectural Unit 10.

Architectural Unit 10: (2317 m.a.s.l.); a complex of five adjacent enclosures on the slope. Enclosures 1 and 2 are lower than the rest (Figures 5 and 6). Enclosure 1 is rectangular and measures 10 meters along its long sides and 7.50 meters along its short sides. Enclosures 2, 3, and 4 (E2-E4) have quadrilateral ground plans measuring between 5 and 7 meters along their sides. Enclosure 5 (E5) is circular with an internal diameter of 5 meters. The entire compound is made of double-faced walls with rubble and sediment fill, employing large blocks of stone. The common walls can reach one meter in width. The height of the walls varies according to their positions in the compound. In Enclosures 1 and 2 (E1 and E2) they are close to a meter high, and in Enclosures 4 and 5 (E4 and E5) there are low walls of only one or two courses (Figure 6).

Architectural Unit 11: (2323 m.a.s.l.); a compound of two adjacent enclosures with double-faced walls with rubble and sediment fill. Enclosure 1 has a circular ground plan with an internal diameter of 5 meters (Figure 7), while Enclosure 2 is quadrangular, with walls measuring 5 meters along each side.

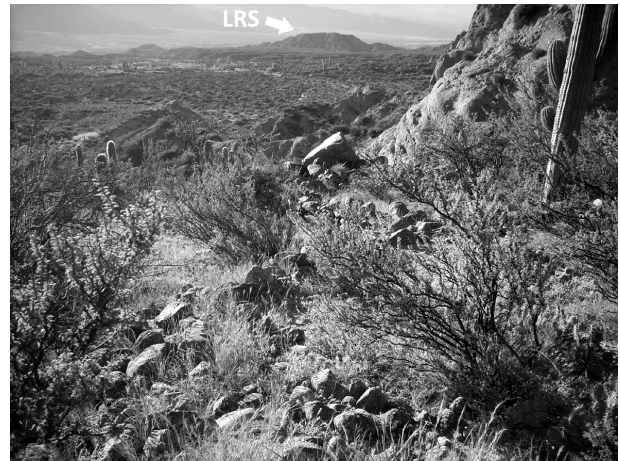


Figure 6: General view of Enclosures 1 and 2 of Architectural Unit 10 from Enclosure 3. In the background is the Loma Rica de Shiquimil.



Figure 7: Detail showing the height of the internal wall of Enclosure 1, Architectural Unit 11.

Architectural Unit 12: (2328 m.a.s.l.); a compound of two adjacent circular enclosures with double-faced walls with rubble and sediment fill. The compound has a stone block with five shallow depressions (Figure 8).



Figure 8: Shallow depressions on a block of stone found in Architectural Unit 12.

All the units observed on the western slope of Don Mateo exhibit the same construction methods—double-faced walls with rubble and sediment fill between 0.50 and 1 meters wide. They also have a ground plan consisting mainly of quadrilateral enclosures. Both features are characteristic of habitation sites from the Late Period Santa María culture. The building stones selected for use are of small-to-medium size gneiss locally found in the form of round stones, like those used at the Loma Rica de Shiquimil and the majority of other sites built on the eastern slopes. These constitute, therefore, the first geo-referenced evidence of another late residential site in Andalhuala, in a radius of less than five kilometers from the *pukara* of Loma Rica de Shiquimil.

Álvarez Larrain previously believed that a trait that distinguished the late settlement of the southeastern Yocavil Valley with respect to the opposite side of the river was the absence of associated enclosures on slopes typical of the settlements on the alluvial fans of the Sierra del Cajón. Considering that the presence of glaciares with sandstone walls on the eastern margin impedes this type of installation, populations were forced to settle on flat-topped hills, or on

the lower piedmont terraces near the rivers. Nevertheless, although Don Mateo presents a morphology typical of the southeastern part of the valley (terraces delimited by sandstone crags), the sector chosen for the construction of the settlement was its small fan. In this sense, the units of two or more adjacent enclosures half-excavated in the slope and following its natural levels, resemble the sector of the population center on the alluvial fan at Rincón Chico, a town located on the opposite side of the river (Tarragó 2011).

Don Mateo–El Cerro

The cultural evidence observed at Don Mateo presented above, and the topographic traits of the site, such as the fact that it is located on a lateral extension of the main Aconquija mountain chain, at an altitude approximately four hundred meters above the valley floor, and with a perfect view of the Loma Rica de Shiquimil, make it highly probable that Don Mateo and El Cerro are the same settlement. An interesting line of proposed future work will allow, through the creation of a complete plan of the site, the identification of Unit UI, excavated in 1960, as a way to fully demonstrate that they are the same site.

In a preliminary, but convincing, way, evidence suggests that Don Mateo–El Cerro constitutes another habitation area in a concentrated pattern of the Late Period at Andalhuala. This population center could be linked to the Loma Rica de Shiquimil both in cultural terms, revealing similar architectural practices and ceramic styles (the Santa María style), and in terms of panoramic views and sight-lines, with both settlements having excellent inter-visibility from their highest parts (Figure 6). This allows one to suggest that the population of Don Mateo–El Cerro may have been within the political sphere of the Loma Rica de Shiquimil.

The relationship between the *pukara*-type settlements and subsidiary populations, or lower settlements, has been tackled from different perspectives which run from the simultaneous settlement of differentiated population sectors, to the occupation of new segments in response to population increase, or, as proposed for example, by Axel E. Nielsen (1996:320-321) for the Quebrada de Huamahuaca, settlements may, perhaps, be used from time to time and alternatively by the same population, in response to armed conflict. A recent study of Loma de los Antiguos (Catamarca Province), a fortified site, allowed Federico Wynveldt to suggest that only a few family groups had access to this fortress, drawing his conclusion from the lack of complete occupation of this protected hill (Wynveldt 2009:319-320). Wynveldt proposes that the Loma de los Antiguos functioned as the seat of a local leadership that remained effectively integrated into the population dedicated to agricultural production in the Azampay area.

In keeping with these suggestions, it can be emphasized that the Loma Rica de Shiquimil is at the “entrance” to the Andalhuala area, near the trunk road of the main valley, a characteristic that justifiably made it one of the best-known and most-visited sites. In this manner, the population of Loma Rica de Shiquimil, so easily distinguishable on the landscape, enjoyed a strategic topographic location that gave it visual control of the main valley, while, at the same time, protected it. This could have been necessary for it to protect, in turn, other settlements and the rural sector occupying the lower glacis. Strikingly, Don Mateo–El Cerro is found located where it is easily accessed, apparently without defensive constructions, but in the interior of the area, in a hidden corner, visually protected by the hills that surround the area of Andalhuala on the west. This settlement may have been in intimate spacial association with cultivated fields created on the banks of the Yapes

River. In this sense, Loma Rica de Shiquimil, as a settlement with defensive features and visual control of the main valley, may have protected the population settled at Don Mateo–El Cerro. Within a context of fragmented sociopolitical units, or small domains among which a dynamic relationship of alliances and conflicts prevailed (Tarragó 2011), the evidence recovered at Andalhuala can be included within the same territorial unit whose political seat may have been located at Loma Rica de Shiquimil. This unit may have extended about five kilometers around Loma Rica de Shiquimil, also including the lower settlements recorded to the north at Entre Ríos, or even farther away, to the *pukara* Loma Rica de Jujuil (LRJ), within a system of allied *pukara*.

Conclusions

Although the inclusion of Loma Rica de Shiquimil and Don Mateo–El Cerro in the Santa María populations is irrefutable, future excavations must be undertaken to refine knowledge of the occupation of the lower settlement. This will be a starting point for progress in knowing the possible connections with Loma Rica de Shiquimil within the regional settlement pattern. At the moment, the view that is developing of the spacial relationship between the settlements is promising. Likewise, the association established between Don Mateo and El Cerro is of fundamental value, given that it would be the first observed case for the Yocavil Valley of a domestic context with San José ceramics, which, until now, had only been found in cemeteries and as isolated burial finds.

Translated from the Spanish by Monica Barnes

REFERENCES CITED

- Álvarez Larrain, Alina
2014 *Habitar una región: Espacialidad arquitectónica y construcción de paisajes en Andalhuala, valle de*

- Yocavil (Catamarca, Argentina). Doctoral thesis, Universidad de Buenos Aires.
- Arkush, Elizabeth
2011 *Hillforts of the Ancient Andes: Colla Warfare, Society and Landscape*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.
- Arkush, Elizabeth and Charles Stanish
2005 Interpreting Conflict in the Ancient Andes: Implications for the Archaeology of Warfare. *Current Anthropology* 46(1):3-27.
- Arocena, María L. and Blanca Carnevali
1960 Andalhuala. In *Investigaciones arqueológicas en el Valle de Santa María*. Publicación 4:53-63. Rosario, Argentina: Instituto de Antropología, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Universidad Nacional del Litoral.
- Nielsen, Axel E.
1996 Demografía y cambio social en la Quebrada de Humahuaca (Jujuy, Argentina) 700-1535 d. C. *Relaciones de la Sociedad Argentina de Antropología* 21:307-385.
- Ruíz Huidrobo, Oscar J.
1972 Descripción geológica de la hoja 11e, Santa María. *Boletín* 134. Buenos Aires: Ministerio de Industria y Minería, Subsecretaría de Minería, Servicio Nacional Minero Geológico.
- Tarragó, Myriam Noemí
2000 Chacras y pukara: Desarrollos sociales tardíos. In *Nueva historia argentina: Los pueblos originarios y la Conquista I*, edited by Myriam Noemí Tarragó, pp. 257-300. Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana.
- 2011 Poblados tipo pukara en Yocavil: El plano de Rincón Chico 1 (Catamarca, Argentina). *Estudios sociales del NOA, Nueva Serie* 11:33-61.
- Tarragó, Myriam Noemí, Sergio Caviglia, María de las Mercedes Peralta Sanhuesa and Jorge Sosa
1988 *Los grupos cerámicos del poblado de Loma Rica de Shiquimil, Catamarca Argentina*. Paper presented at the IX Congreso Nacional de Arqueología Argentina. Buenos Aires.
- Wynveldt, Federico
2009 *La Loma de los Antiguos de Azampay: Un sitio defensivo del Valle de Hualfín (Catamarca, Argentina)*. Buenos Aires: Sociedad Argentina de Antropología.